

## Changing organisation at the Salzburg Festival, Austria

### Factbox

Salzburg International Festival.

Established in 1920

231,000 visitors attended the 166 events comprising the festival and spent €43.8 million in 2002

4876 journalists, from 30 countries, were there.

75% of visitors are from outside Austria

### Background

After several years work, Max Reinhardt, with several friends and colleagues, succeeded in establishing a music festival, in the Cathedral Square, Salzburg, Austria, during 1920. Although a lack of finances prompted a break in 1924, the festival grew, under Max Reinhardt's volunteer directorship, into an international event, expanding into several venues and beyond music, into drama. Quickly moving onto the international stage, the festival began radio broadcasts within five years (radio being relatively new at that time). The festival has continued to the present day, despite various political difficulties in the eighty years of its existence. Today, a public square in Salzburg is named after Max Reinhardt.

Politics has sometimes impacted on the festival's evolution. Despite the festival's early success, and its ability to attract foreign visitors, various political actions affected it in its early years, while it was still run, largely informally, by Max Reinhardt. In 1933, the then German Nazi regime imposed a 1,000 mark visa charge on visits to Austria – cutting the number of German visitors from over 15,000 to just over 800. In 1938, Austria was annexed by Germany, and the Nazis took over, but not all Austrians supported this. The film "The Sound of Music", contains not only the famous scene of the Austrian Captain Von Trapp tearing the Nazi flag down from outside his home, but also deals with the escape of his family from pursuit, (including scenes from the Salzburg Festival itself), some of which were filmed in the Mirabell Castle and other parts of the city. Germany and Austria made war on much of Europe from 1939 and were defeated. After the war, in 1945, the festival radio broadcast is credited as being the first common act in Austria by the occupying powers (Britain, America, France and Russia).

### Progress

In 1950, the Salzburg Festival Foundation was set up, which put the event onto a formal and professional basis with a Board of Directors, and in 1952, the Festival became a founding member of the European Festivals Association. The Festival benefits from the efforts of a broad base of supporters, ranging from high-profile managers to experienced arts patrons operating, since 1961, under the umbrella of "The Association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival". In 1983, performances were relayed live for the first time to visitors in the Cathedral Square. During the 1990s, organisers began long-term co-operation with sponsors, such as Nestlé, ABB and Allianz, and a re-organisation of the festival's Board and activities – introducing such innovations as subscription tickets for youngsters and "Curtain Up" access to rehearsals, took place.

The expanding "Festival District" now encompasses permanent venues e.g. the Festival Halls, historic properties e.g. Felsenreitschule or Summer Riding School, and uses both open-air and temporarily covered spaces e.g. the Cathedral Square and the courtyard of the Residence. This evolution demonstrates both the financial scope of large festivals and the civic pride that they can build upon. The festival, during its long existence, has contributed significantly to the revitalisation of Salzburg as a cultural centre (together with the city's association with Mozart), and to the imaginative use of many of the city's fine historic buildings for public activities.

### Questions based on this case:

How has the Salzburg Festival developed - Is professionalization an inevitable consequence of the organisational progress of all events?

What benefits has the festival brought to Salzburg and for whom?

What problems might be associated with the success of a festival and how might these problems be addressed?

### Websites:

Related websites for those interested in the Salzburg Festival:

[www.salzburgerfestspiele.at](http://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at)

European Festivals Association:

[www.efa-aef.eu](http://www.efa-aef.eu)

For more pictures of the Salzburg Festival see:

[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

## Case Notes

This links to the new case, in the latest edition - Case 13 ("Salzburg Festival: political implications of events").

Salzburg is an interesting case where a festival was originally set up by a private individual and his friends. When Max Reinhart ceased to be involved, the festival nearly ceased to exist for want of a driving force to take on the task. This often happens with voluntary events – if the chief organiser leaves, or dies, or loses interest, the event may not survive the loss. Many do not. Only in some cases may a new person or group of people carry the event on. Alternatively, the event may become professional, especially if it has assumed a major importance to a particular location, and the loss of it might have a serious effect such as loss of visitors.

Benefits: A major issue here is the long term public profile or image development as a cultural city, which the festival has generated for Salzburg, as well as the economic and social benefits generated over the many years which the festival has taken place.

Problems: In the case of Salzburg, this is the issue of sustainability or "carrying capacity" (that is to say, for example, how many people a location can actually cope with). An event may grow so much in popularity that it outstrips the capacity or ability of the organisers or the local area to cope with it or to cope with the demand from the public for local services – anything from toilets, to accommodation. Separately, people giving money have an agenda, something they want to get out of the event, whether this is advertising, hospitality for their guests or, possibly more seriously, influence over what happens. In some cases complying with sponsors' wishes or demands does indeed restrict what organisers can do or limits their freedom of action in some way.